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OPERATIONAL DECISIONS:
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE INFORMATION REQUIRED?

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by

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ABSTRACT

OPERATIONAL DECISIONS: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE INFORMATION REQUIRED? by Major William G. Butler, USA, 34 pages.

This monograph analyzes two historical campaigns and current doctrine to determine what information is required of the operational commander to make decisions. It looks at the nature of the information used by the operational commander in the formulation of his campaign plan. The monograph also presents conclusions based on the analysis and implications for current doctrine.

The operational commander is required to link battlefield success to strategic goals. The commander must base his decisions on both current tactical information and on strategic information concerning his opponent. The missing link in the information chain is what information is needed by the operational commander to make informed decisions.

FM 100-5, Operations, has reintroduced the U.S. Army to the concept of operational art. The practice of the operational art requires the commander to make critical decisions in time and space that is different from the tactical commander. The foundation for these decisions requires information that is different from the information requirement of the tactical commander. The campaigns of General U.S. Grant in 1864 and General William Slim in 1944 in Burma are used as the vehicles to demonstrate the unique nature of the information required by operational commanders. FM 100-5, Operations, FM 34-1, Intelligence and Electronic Warfare, and FM 100-16, Echelons Above Corps are reviewed to determine to what extent current doctrine recognizes the information requirement for operational commanders. A comparison of the analysis of the historical campaigns with a review of current doctrine reveals shortcomings in current doctrine regarding the information requirement for operational commanders.

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OPERATIONAL DECISIONS:
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF INFORMATION REQUIRED?

"By the word 'Information', we denote all the knowledge which we have of the enemy and his country; therefore, in fact, the foundation of all our ideas and actions." - Clausewitz.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history successful armies understood and practiced the principles of operational art. Napoleon's greatest contribution to the art of war was in this arena. His military campaigns fused strategy and tactics. They were characterized by the continuous process of marching, maneuvering, fighting and pursuing.

U.S. Army doctrine reintroduced the concept of operational art in the 1982 revision of Field Manual 100-5, OPERATIONS. "The operational level of war uses available military resources to attain strategic goals within a theater of war. Most simply, it is the theory and practice of large unit operations. It also involves planning and conducting campaigns. Campaigns are sustained operations designed to defeat an enemy force in a specified space and time with simultaneous and sequential battles."¹ This definition

¹FM 100-5 OPERATIONS. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1982, pg. 2-3

underwent changes through an evolutionary process after 1982. The current FM 100-5 defines operational art "as the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations."² The object of campaigns is to strike at the center of gravity (source of power) of an opponent. A nation's power is derived from political, economic, military, psychological (will of the people), and geographical sources.³

The common thread running through these two definitions is the fact that operational art employs large military forces to conduct major operations which seek to translate battlefield success into strategic goals. Some characteristics of operational art are:

- broad vision (thinking big)
- an intellectual process more than the use of physical force
- using imagination
- executing movement to place superior combat power at the decisive point within the theater of operations
- making use of battles for the purpose of the campaign
- maneuvering units in the presence of the enemy but not in contact with the enemy
- practicing the art of war rather than skill of fighting
- attaining military advantage by increasing the probability of battlefield success and by increasing the consequences of battlefield victory by maneuvering units prior to, during, and

²FM 100-5 OPERATIONS, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1986, pg. 10

³Spanier, John GAMES NATIONS PLAY, New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, pg. 124

after the battle⁴

From these characteristics one can understand that the commander practicing operational art is required to make critical decisions in a timely manner. Unlike the tactical commander, the operational commander makes decisions in advance of actual battle. The operational commander decides when and where to accept battle. He determines what resources are necessary in terms of combat power to ensure success. From these decisions the commander identifies which units to employ, when these units are to be moved and where they are to be positioned. "Reduced to its essentials, operational art requires the commander to answer three questions:

1. What military condition must be produced in the theater of war or theater of operations to achieve the strategic goals?
2. What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?
3. How should the resources of the force be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?⁵

While the operational commander makes fewer decisions than the tactical commander, the decisions that he does make have considerably greater impact than those made by the tactical commander. In addition, decisions made by the tactical commander are normally much easier to change, correct, or amend than decisions made by the operational commander. The point is that operational commanders must be right or at

⁴Frenz, William P., COL., USA. "Maneuver: The Dynamic Element of Combat", MILITARY REVIEW, May 1983, pg. 2-12.

⁵FM 100-5, OPERATIONS, Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, May 1986, pg. 10

least nearly right with the first decision because it is unlikely they will be able to correct a mistake without accepting a substantial loss of time and resources to the total force.

To ensure correct decisions, the operational commander requires information. The purpose of this monograph is to answer the question, "What is the nature of information required to make operational decisions?" Intuitively one thinks that there is no difference in the nature of information required by the operational commander from the information required by the tactical commander. To ascertain the nature of information required by the operational commander, this monograph will review and analyze two historical campaigns. It will then review current doctrine. Based upon analysis of the historical campaigns and review of current doctrine conclusions will be presented. Finally, this monograph will present some implications for modern doctrine. The thrust of the historical campaigns presented will be to look at the nature of operational information and how it impacted on the campaigns, not how specific information led to a specific event on the battlefield.

HISTORICAL CAMPAIGNS

U.S. Grant's Campaign of 1864

"The nation's appreciation of what you have done, and its reliance upon you for what remains to do, in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this commission, constituting you Lieutenant General in the Army of the United States."⁶

⁶Simon, John Y., ed., THE PAPERS OF ULYSSES S. GRANT, Vol. 10, January-June 1864, Carbondale, IL; Southern Illinois University Press, 1982, pg. 195.

With these words President Lincoln bestowed the rank of Lieutenant General upon U.S. Grant. President Lincoln sought the recreation of this rank and appointment of Grant to unify the efforts of the Federal armies against the rebellious Confederate forces. Prior to Grant's appointment the Union armies fought as independent entities with only general guidance from Washington. General Grant's task was to unite the Union armies under one commander and prosecute a decisive campaign against the Confederacy.

Grant's campaign of 1864 was based on three fundamental decisions. These decisions were when, where and with what forces he could prosecute a campaign against the Confederacy. We will first take a look at the general concept of Grant's campaign and then analyze why he made the decisions he did based upon the information available to him.

On 4 May 1864 Grant commenced his campaign against the Confederate armies. The Union Army of the Potomac attacked across the Rapidan River in Northern Virginia to destroy the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. General Sherman attacked South from Tennessee toward Atlanta, Georgia to fix the Confederate army commanded by General Johnston, to destroy the rail network center in Atlanta, and to bring the consequences of war deep into the interior of the Confederacy. A small Union army commanded by General Butler was based at Fort Monroe and designated to hold that important position and eventually operate in conjunction with the Army of the Potomac. A fourth army commanded by General Sigel was to operate in the Shenandoah Valley to deny resources to the Confederates and to defend against any move toward Washington. A fifth army under General Banks was to concentrate at New Orleans and attack east to seize Mobile, Alabama. This army did not participate in the

campaign as planned because it was committed to an operation on the Red River near Shreveport, Louisiana and could not extract itself.

The answer to the question of when to engage in battle was based upon Grant's assessment of the political and military situation.

From the time Grant assumed the position of Commanding General of the Armed Forces of the United States on 10 March 1864 until 4 May 1864 when he crossed the Rapidan River, he had approximately eight weeks to grasp the political and military situation. The operation required him to concentrate large numbers of scattered troops. He needed to organize them into a small number of powerful armies and to distribute them according to the demands of his strategy. After accomplishing this, he developed a campaign plan for all Union forces.

"Grant realized that the problems which confronted him were as much political as military, and to save the North from moral dry rot, his problem was not merely one of winning the war in the most economical way, but of crushing the rebellion in the shortest possible time."⁷

The peace movement in the north was gaining popularity. The draft system was corrupt. The first term enlistments were approaching their end and there was every indication that the political representatives were not willing to expand the mobilization.

Grant also assessed the political status of the Confederacy. He recognized that his own efforts in the west allowed the Union army to control the Mississippi River and had divided the Confederacy. Furthermore, the lack of a Confederate military victory on the battlefield and the Union blockade of Southern ports forestalled the Confederacy's attempt to receive

⁷Fuller, J.F.C. Major General, U.K., THE GENERALSHIP OF ULYSSIS S. GRANT, Bloomington, In.; Indiana University Press, 1929, pg. 209.

international political recognition and assistance. Grant concluded that if a decisive campaign could be waged against the military forces of the Confederacy, the political apparatus of the Confederacy would crumble. The target was to defeat the Confederate armies in the field to bring about the collapse of the Confederate States of America.

Grant's decision on where to fight was based upon his knowledge of the "center of gravity" of the Confederate Armed Forces.

The linchpin of the Confederate armies in the field was General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Grant knew that Lee was the best general in the Confederate army and the Army of Northern Virginia was the best army. If Lee and his army could be destroyed then the Confederate armed forces' spine would be broken and the spiritual foundation of the Confederacy would be defeated.

Military theory suggests the spiritual defeat of an armed force may be assisted by the psychological defeat of the nation's people. To hasten this psychological defeat, Grant sought to bring the war to areas of the Confederacy that previously had been isolated from battle. One of the major operations within his campaign plan would serve two purposes. General Sherman's operation against the Confederate General Johnston would ; (1) prevent Johnston's army from reinforcing Lee , and (2) bring the consequences of war to the depth of the Confederacy. It would destroy resources needed by the armies in the field and hopefully hasten the psychological opposition to continuing the war by the people of the Confederacy.

The psychological defeat of a people may be enhanced by economic losses and deprivation. Grant intuitively was aware of this. His campaign plan also addressed this objective. He intended to tighten the economic

stranglehold on the Confederacy by conducting a major operation to attack the port cities of Mobile, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida from the west. This operation was to be conducted in conjunction with Sherman's operation against the rail network in the South. Success meant that the Southern states would be deprived of their last seaport and would have no effective rail transportation system. Lacking seaports to receive or export material the economic system of the Confederacy would wither.

The planning and ultimate execution of a campaign plan is often constrained by the geography upon which the battles are to be fought. The target of Grant's campaign of 1864, the Army of Northern Virginia, faced the Union Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan River in northern Virginia. Grant had two options concerning the direction of his attack. One direction attacked his opponent's right flank through an area called the Wilderness. A previous battle fought there had been unsuccessful with extensive Union casualties. The terrain consisted of thick forests and undergrowth. Very few roads traversed the area. The second direction attacked the left flank of the Confederate army. The disadvantage of this direction, Grant ascertained, was that it lengthened his lines of communication, uncovered the city of Washington, and did not allow for a unified effort between the Army of the Potomac and General Butler's army positioned to threaten Richmond or Petersburg.

With this general understanding of Grant's assessment of his forthcoming campaign let us examine the information available to him about the status of his own forces.

Understanding the political underpinnings of his problems, Grant turned to the reorganization of the military. He reduced the military departments from twenty-five to eighteen and nominated their

commanders. He organized the bulk of the troops into five main armies. The military condition Grant sought to accomplish to achieve the strategic goal was the destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia. The military action required to produce this end state was to engage the Army of Northern Virginia in such a way that it remained on the defense and could not be reinforced by other elements of the Confederate Armies. In consideration of this, Grant decided that the resources of his force should be organized into five main armies and that the actions of these armies would be conducted simultaneously.

Grant's information requirement for his campaign of 1864 demonstrates the unique nature of the operational commander. The operational commander must be attuned not only to his own nation's political priorities but also his opponent's political status. He must direct the military effort toward an end which will achieve the stated and sometimes unstated political objectives. In doing so the operational commander requires information upon which to base decisions about activities that are to happen in the future vis-a-vis the present. Grant sought to bring Lee to battle outside of any fortified position. If he was unable to do this his plan was thorough enough to react and to lay siege to Richmond even if Lee were able to withdraw into the city.

To gain a more recent insight into how operational planning evolved let us now examine the operations of the British 14th Army in Burma during World War II, commanded by General William Slim.

Slim in Burma

During the eight months between January and August 1943 the leaders of the United States, Great Britain and Russia held three National-level conferences to determine the course of future Allied strategy. At each of these conferences the policy to be adopted in Southeast Asia was reviewed.

The "Trident" conference produced important resolutions concerning the strategy and command structure in Southeast Asia. A separate command was created to control all operations in the theater. A British Supreme Commander was appointed with an American Deputy and an integrated Anglo-American staff. The "Quadrant" conference ratified this proposal and Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Commander, with Lieutenant General Stillwell of the US Army as his Deputy.

Upon taking command, Admiral Mountbatten appointed General William Slim as the commander of the British 14th Army. Slim was by far the most experienced commander to oppose the Japanese because of his participation in the retreat from Burma in 1942. He knew the tactics and the characteristics of the Japanese. Additionally, he had had an opportunity to assess why the British had failed in the past.

General Slim's information requirements were similar to General Grant's. However Slim operated in a secondary theater of war and, unlike Grant, was two levels of command removed from his nation's political leaders. These circumstances required Slim to make an assessment of his own sources of power and to assess how the Japanese source of power was manifested on the battlefields of Burma. Unlike Grant, Slim did not design a campaign to strike at the Japanese homeland. Instead his task was to protect his own source of power while at the same time attacking the Japanese forces in Burma. Slim did not have an organization that supplied him with information which could be characterized as operational

intelligence. He did receive information from many sources but he was his own analyst. He made decisions based upon his own intuitive judgment. This ability was the result of his accurate assessments of the battlefield (his "genius").

Immediately upon assuming command of the 14th Army, General Slim made an assessment of the situation. Like Grant he made three decisions concerning when, where and with what forces he could attack the Japanese. In determining when he could commence an offensive his most pressing problem was to restore the morale and fighting spirit of the 14th Army. In reviewing what forces were available to him, his assessment was that he did not have sufficient military strength to conduct an offensive operation against the Japanese. Consequently he decided that he had to dictate where he would accept battle. He recognized that he must first cause the Japanese to attack him at the time and place most favorable to the 14th Army.

Based upon his own assessment General Slim concluded that several conditions caused the low state of morale in the 14th Army. The army was a defeated army. It had retreated from Burma after being soundly defeated by the Japanese. The soldiers of the 14th Army considered the Japanese soldier superior for combat in the jungle environment. The army was short of all categories of supply. The health of the soldiers was poor. They lacked confidence in their leaders and did not feel a kinship to other soldiers in other organizations within the 14th Army.

Before Slim could formulate a campaign plan to defeat the Japanese Army in Burma he had to rebuild the 14th Army into a fighting force. We will first take a look at the measures Slim took to accomplish this and then look at his concept for the campaign against the Japanese.

Slim was confronted with shortages in all supply categories. Compounding the supply problem was an inadequate transportation network. Railroads were insufficient. There was a shortage of motor transport. There were few roads and what roads there were laid at the mercy of a devastating climate and the presence of enemy actions. To assist him in solving this labyrinth of logical problems, Slim appointed "Al" Snelling as Major-General in Charge of Administration.

The supply problem was critical but with the help of General Auchinleck, Commander-in Chief of the India Command, and the untiring efforts of MG Snelling, the necessary supplies began to get through to the units of the 14th Army.

Slim's second concern was the health of his men. "In 1943, for every man evacuated with wounds one hundred and twenty were evacuated due to sickness."⁸ Slim answered this problem with three major programs. The first was a practical application of the latest medical research. The second was the treatment of the sick in forward areas instead of evacuation to India. Third was the use of air evacuation of serious casualties to transport them to modern medical facilities rapidly.

The low state of morale, exacerbated by health conditions, was also a result of a "record of defeat, the lack of even the elementary amenities, the discomfort of life in the jungle, and worst of all the feeling of isolation, with all the heart sickness of long separation from home."⁹

The political situation for Slim was different than Grant's. Slim's army was one component of a coalition fighting the Japanese. Slim's

⁸ Slim, William Sir Field Marshall, DEFEAT INTO VICTORY, London, Eng.,; Cassell and Company Ltd., 1959, pg. 177

⁹Ibid, pg. 181

political information requirement included the goals and objectives of the United States and China. In addition the 14th Army was a polyglot army consisting of British, Burmese, and Indian forces.

These were some of the monumental problems that faced Slim before he began to plan for his campaign against the Japanese. Let us now take a look at Slim's planning process for his campaign and the information that drove his plan.

A proper perspective on the immensity of the problems which faced Slim, both operationally and logistically, can be gained only by an examination of the prodigious length of the front for which he was responsible. It is also necessary to review the general conditions of the country through which his lines of communications ran beyond the railheads to the area in which the soldiers would ultimately have to fight.

The word "front" is a misnomer because it implies a continuous line, whereas in fact the 14th Army Command comprised three distinct areas of operations, widely separated from one another by large areas of mountainous jungle and waterways.

As the crow flies, between the Northern front at Ledo and the Central area around Imphal there was a gap of 200 miles and an even greater one of 250 miles between Imphal and Arakan in the South. There were no lateral communications other than by air. Travel between the fronts by any other means than air required a long and tedious journey.

The geography of Burma dictated the type of warfare to be conducted. Thus geography became the predominant information requirement in the formulation of Slim's campaign plan. He recognized that he required mobility for the movement of his corps and divisions. To gain this mobility he would have to depend on air assets, not only for delivery of supplies but also for

the movement of troop formations. Thus he made a decision to reorganize some units to make them more suitable for aerial transport. This reorganization would also require training of the units. He selected units to return to India and be trained under this new concept. In addition he stressed the training of units to be able to fight when their land lines of communications were cut and resupply was by air alone. This foresight into the nature of the battlefield was to prove decisive in the forthcoming campaign.

Lord Mountbatten's staff had originally devised seven projects which were to be executed in the reconquest of Burma. These initial seven were reduced to four, all of which were to be under Slim's direction. These projects were the advance of XV Corps in the Arakan, the advance of IV Corps to the Chindwin River, General Stillwell's advance to Myitkyina in the North and finally the employment of General Wingate's Long-Range Penetration forces in support of Stillwell.

Slm's concept for the opening stages of his campaign conformed to the principles which he applied to planning all operations. These principles were:

- "(i) The ultimate intention must be an offensive one.
- (ii) The main idea on which the plan was based must be simple.
- (iii) That idea must be held in view throughout and everything else must give way to it.
- (iv) The plan must have in it an element of surprise."¹⁰

The Arakan operation began on the last day of November 1943. Slim had decided that the operations of the 14th Army would require that units be suitable for transportation and resupply by aerial means. Prior to the

¹⁰Ibid, pg. 209

start of the campaign, Slim received word that the required number of parachutes would not be available. During this crisis Slim's foresight and innovation were demonstrated. He conceived of the idea of making parachutes out of jute.

Jute was abundant in the area. He needed only to get the merchants in India to fabricate the parachutes out of jute and test the concept. It proved to be possible and was 85% reliable for dropping non-fragile supplies. The operational commander must rely on his nation's economy to provide him with the tools and/or resources to wage war. In Slim's case he often had to supplement his nation's economic efforts. Examples of this were the conception, production, and procurement of the parachutes, the construction of boats for the crossing of the Chindwin River, and the manufacture of a rubber base cloth to be placed on road beds to make the roads serviceable during the Monsoon season. Slim's creativity made it possible for the campaign to begin.

As previously mentioned , the first phase of the campaign called for advances on three fronts. Stillwell made consistent progress toward his objective in the North. Wingate's force completed a surprise insertion deep in the enemy's rear. General Scoones who was commanding the IV Corps in the Central Front moved to the banks of the Chindwin River with relatively light resistance. Initially, the XV Corps' advance into the Arakan region was opposed by one Japanese division. After limited success the Corps ran into well fortified positions. Success or failure hung in the balance when the Japanese conducted a large scale counterattack. British units were isolated with their lines of communications cut. Because of Slim's foresight the units were able to continue to fight being resupplied totally by air with prepackaged loads .

Prior to the end of the Battle in Arakan, it was clear to Slim based upon patrol reports that the Japanese planned to take the offensive in the Central region. In this region Slim had considered three broad alternatives for the continuation of his campaign. They were:

- "(i) to anticipate the enemy offensive by crossing the Chindwin and attacking him first.
- (ii) to hold the Japanese 33d Division in the Tiddim area and fight with all available forces on the line of the Chindwin, hoping to destroy the enemy as he crossed the river, with part of his force on each side.
- (iii) to concentrate 4 Corps in the Imphal plain and fight the decisive battle there on ground of our own choosing.¹¹

Slim chose the third alternative. It was his view that an invasion of Burma was risky. "If we could somehow seriously weaken the Japanese army *before* we plunged into Burma, the whole picture would be changed. The only way this could be done was, at an early stage, to entice the enemy into a major battle in circumstances so favorable to us that we could smash three or four of his divisions."¹²

Based upon this assessment, Slim's campaign plan called for a deliberate withdrawal from the Chindwin River to accept battle on the Imphal Plain. This demonstrates Slim's ability to recognize the military imperatives of current operations in preparation for future military actions.

The battle of the Imphal Plain was decisive. The outcome of the battle verged on defeat for the 14th Army. Because of an incorrect assessment of the ability of the Japanese to traverse the jungle mountains, they attacked in greater numbers than anticipated and in directions not foreseen. Victory

¹¹ibid, pg. 290

¹²ibid, pg. 215

was achieved because of the fighting spirit instilled in the army by Slim and because of Slim's insight and agility in the maneuver of his forces. Air resources played a major role in the victory. Slim was able to resupply forces cut off and to bring in reinforcements by air. His adroit employment of his air assets saved the day.

By 4 June 1944 the Battle on the Imphal Plain had been decided in favor of the 14th Army. Determined not to give the Japanese a respite Slim planned to press the attack across the Chindwin River. He believed Kawabe, the Japanese commander, would be reluctant to give ground and a decisive battle would be fought between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy River with the city of Mandalay in the balance. Slim was in error. He based his assumptions on his experience of fighting Kawabe. Unbeknownst to Slim, Kawabe had been replaced and Kimura was now the Japanese commander. General Kimura organized his defense on the far side of the Irrawaddy River. This is an example of the necessity for the operational commander to know the commander that he opposes.

Slim crossed the Chindwin River on 4 December in anticipation of a major battle. Within a few days there were strong indications that the bulk of the Japanese within the Irrawaddy loop had crossed the river and were preparing a defense on the other side.

At this point Slim had to decide whether to continue with his original operation or change the plan completely. Time was a matter of urgency because the more formations of the 14th Army that crossed the Chindwin River, the longer and more difficult it would be to effect a change in the operation. "The plan he evolved was to prove the master stroke of strategy of the Burma campaign."¹³

¹³Evans, Geoffrey SLIM AS MILITARY COMMANDER. Princeton, N.J.; Van Nostrand, 1969, pg. 181

Slim's plan called for the XXXIII Corps to be reinforced with elements of the IV Corps and continue the advance toward the Irrawaddy River giving every indication that Mandalay was the objective of the 14th Army. The IV Corps was surreptitiously to move down the Myittha Valley, seize a bridgehead across the Irrawaddy River behind the Japanese vicinity Pakokku and attack to seize Meiktila. This would force Kimura to commit his reserve at Meiktila to protect his rear. Once this had occurred the XXXIII Corps would cross the Irrawaddy and seize Mandalay without the threat of the Japanese defense being reinforced. A subsequent phase of the operation was to have the IV Corps act as the anvil while the hammer, the XXXIII Corps, advanced south. Once the link-up between the two corps was effected they would continue the pursuit south destroying the Japanese army.

This last phase of the campaign epitomizes General Slim's military foresight and demonstrates his mastery of the operational art. The military condition required to achieve the strategic goal, to reopen the China-Burma road, was to destroy the Japanese forces in Burma. The sequence of actions most likely to produce this condition was first to accept battle under conditions most favorable to the British 14th Army and then pursue the Japanese army during the monsoon season not allowing them to recover or reinforce their forces in Burma. Finally, Slim developed his plan to employ his resources in the most effective manner to achieve the desired end state.

Analysis

FM 100-5, OPERATIONS, delineates the requirement for the operational art practitioner to "design, organize and conduct campaigns."¹⁴

¹⁴FM 100-5, pg. 10

The manual states that during the planning stages for a campaign " An effective campaign plan orients on what Clausewitz called the enemy's 'center of gravity', his sources of physical strength or psychological balance."¹⁵ Appendix B of the manual defines the center of gravity of an armed force as that which " . . . refers to those sources of strength or balance. It is that characteristic, capability, or locality from which the force derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight."¹⁶ Thus when the operational commander plans his campaign he seeks to threaten or destroy the enemy's center of gravity through direct or indirect means. To accomplish this the operational commander requires information concerning the source of his opponent's power.

A nation's power is derived from political, economic, military, psychological (will of the people), and geographical sources.¹⁷ The operational commander who is the linchpin between the strategic political goal and the tactical military requirements therefore needs information concerning the mentioned sources of power. A look back at the campaigns of Generals Grant and Slim demonstrates this point.

In consideration of the political situation, Grant never received specific military or political guidance from President Lincoln. Grant correctly ascertained the political climate in the North. He recognized that the peace movement was at least vocal, if not numerically strong. He knew Lincoln needed a military success to enhance his reelection efforts. He also was aware of the political constraints that could often be applied by a wavering Congress. Recruitment of soldiers was one example. The draft

¹⁵Ibid, pg. 29

¹⁶Ibid, pg. 179

¹⁷Spanier, GAMES NATIONS PLAY, pg. 124

system was corrupt. The first term enlistments were approaching their termination date. Whole regiments would leave the battlefield if the Congress did not take political action. Conversely for the Confederacy, he was aware that the tenure of the Confederate government depended upon the survivability and existence of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Psychologically the morale of the Army and the people of the north depended on military victories. Military success came as a result of offensive action. The target of offensive action logically pointed to the Army of Northern Virginia. In addition, to ensure that all parts of the Confederacy experienced the horrors of war he dispatched Sherman on his operation deep into the South.

Militarily Grant sought to pursue a campaign that would engage the Southern forces in total. In doing so the Confederate armies would not be capable of reinforcing one another. Also he was determined not to allow a respite on the part of the Confederate armies. He wished to pursue the fight with continuous pressure. He recognized that General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was the Confederate center of gravity. He sought to engage Lee in a decisive battle outside of Lee's fortified position. If he was unable to accomplish this , he was prepared to lay siege to Richmond. He also believed that the Union armies acting in a concerted manner could isolate Lee in Richmond and eventually defeat his army.

Geography dictated Grant's maneuver. He has been critized for selecting the axis of advance through the Wilderness. However, operationally this was a wise decision. He was able to cover his critical locality, Washington, while at the same time threatening General Lee's, Richmond. Additionally he had protected lines of communications and effective transport with the participation of the Navy operating on the

James River. Finally his axis of advance allowed him to act in concert with his left flank army.

As it has been demonstrated, General Grant required political, economic, military, psychological and geographical information. Based upon this information he planned his campaign. Eighty years later in Southeast Asia the British General Slim required information of a similar nature.

Politically Slim's problem was different from Grant's. Slim had an intermediate commanders between himself and his head of government. In some ways Slim's problem was much more difficult than Grant's. Slim had a myriad of soldiers of different nationalities under his command. In addition he was fighting a coalition war and had to be attuned to the political priorities of the Chinese and Americans. An example of Slim's political problems was the the command structure instituted based upon the refusal of General Stilwell to serve under General Giffard. It is a tribute to Slim's military competence and his political tact that the resolution of the problem was Stilwell willingly subordinating himself to Slim.

Logistically Slim's army was at the bottom rung of the ladder when it came to the economic priorities of his nation. He recognized this and took innovative and imaginative measures to produce unique material necessary to continue the war in Burma. Slim's logistical foresight proved to be decisive in his campaign.

Militarily, Slim was unequalled. He had learned his lessons well during the retreat in 1942. He understood his enemy and was adroit in the operational maneuver of his forces. It is true that he was surprised on two occasions, the first being the time and size of the Japanese attack across the Chindwin River in March 1944 and again when he assumed the Japanese commander would defend between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers. It is a

tribute to his operational and tactical genius that both times he was capable of reacting decisively and emerging the victor not the vanquished.

Slim was very cognizant of the difficulties presented by the terrain over which he had to prosecute his campaign. He had an appreciation of the lack of mobility the terrain created. But just as with the economic situation, Slim was innovative in his solutions of these problems. He instituted novel aerial delivery methods. He reorganized some units to make them more mobile on the ground and easier to transport by air. He established his own boat construction unit to provide boats necessary not only to cross the rivers but also to transport material throughout his area of operations. The climate and terrain of Burma were devastating. Slim took both medical and material steps to diminish its impact on the army.

If the geographical conditions were difficult, the morale of the 14th Army was horrendous. As previously noted Slim gave this his personal attention. He embarked upon a timely program to provide information to the soldiers. The essence of Slim's program was to build rapport between the troop and his leader. Slim recognized the basic ingredient to the recipe for making a soldier fight was the confidence the soldier had in his leader. In addition to visiting and talking to the troops, Slim took measures to supply the basic material needs of the soldier. Once this was done he embarked on a program of limited tactical operations guaranteed to succeed. Because of this he instilled confidence in the soldiers, reduced their fear of the Japanese, and built an aggressive spirit within his army. All of this was necessary prior to executing his campaign plan.

It may be pointed out that Slim did not require information concerning the psychological will of the Japanese people. However, more important to his campaign was the psychological will, the fighting spirit of his own

people. To accomplish the difficult tasks inherent in his campaign plan, the soldiers of the 14th Army had to be convinced that they were fighting for a just and right cause, led by fair and competent commanders.

DOCTRINE

General's Grant and Slim were truly masters in the application of operational art. Neither was cognizant that what they were executing was operational art as defined in the current FM 100-5, OPERATIONS. The term has only recently been used to describe the level of warfare in which these generals performed. Let us review current doctrine, specifically FM 100-5, FM 100-16, and FM 34-1, to determine what decisions are required of the modern operational commander and what information is needed to make operational decisions.

The current operations doctrine establishes the requirements for the operational commander to make decisions concerning what is the military end state required to accomplish a strategic goal. What is the most effective sequence of military actions to produce the end state, and how should resources be employed in support of the military objectives.

These decisions require information which allows the commander to make decisions in the present which will impact in the future when and where he intuitively believes the impact will be most effective.

This is informative and establishes the need for the operational commander to make anticipatory decisions but it does not answer the question, what is the information required to make these visionary decisions.

If the Operations manual does not delineate the information requirement for operational decisions then a review of the current Intelligence (processed information) doctrine is necessary. FM 34-1, INTELLIGENCE and ELECTRONIC WARFARE OPERATIONS dated August 1984 is the current intelligence doctrine. This manual's title implies a new approach to the intelligence requirements of the battlefield. Is this in fact the case? Unfortunately it is not. The new manual does not address the needs of the operational commander. The new manual is a tactical manual. This is understandable because military intelligence has long been divided into two categories, tactical and strategic. The manual fails to recognize the nature of information required by the operational commander is different from that of the tactical commander and strategic planner.

The differences in current doctrine and the information requirements of Generals Grant and Slim are (1) current doctrine does not delineate the information requirements for operational decisions and (2) the doctrine recognizes an information requirement but limits the information to only one source of power for an opponent, the military.

The Military Intelligence School is currently taking measures to address this problem. The Department of Tactics, Intelligence and Military Science at the USA Intelligence Center and School has prepared and delivered briefings on "Intelligence at the Operational Level of War". In this briefing it is stated that "while planning considerations at the tactical level of war will be principally 'military' in nature, planning considerations at the operational level of war will incorporate political, economic,

psychological, sociological, military, and geographical factors on a 'grand scale.'²⁰

The search of doctrine for the information requirement for the operational commander leads to FM 100-16, ECHELONS ABOVE CORPS. This manual includes a chapter on Intelligence, Security, and Electronic Warfare. In this chapter the mission of intelligence operations above corps level is stated as;

- *Intelligence operations, conducted to provide timely information on the enemy --how he fights, his organizations, his capabilities, his location and direction of movement, his critical installations and systems, and his intentions-- and on the terrain and weather.
- *OPSEC support operations, including counter-intelligence
- *Electronic warfare (EW) operations, conducted to disrupt, deceive, or destroy enemy command and control
- *All-source intelligence and EW support to conduct operations "²¹

What is the difference between this mission statement and the mission of intelligence operations at the tactical level? There does not appear to be a difference.

Current US Army doctrine does not recognize a fundamental difference in the information requirement for an operational commander vis-a-vis a tactical commander.

²⁰Briefing presented by Cpt Larry V. Busl, Jan. 1987, at the Command and General Staff College, prepared by the Department of Tactics, Intelligence, and Military Science, USA Intelligence Center and School, titled INTELLIGENCE AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR: OPERATIONAL - LEVEL OF WAR INTELLIGENCE PREPARATION OF THE BATTLEFIELD.

²¹FM 100-16, ECHELONS ABOVE CORPS, Washington, D.C.; Headquarters Department of the Army, August 1984, pg. 3-2.

CONCLUSIONS

Operational decisions are more than simple anticipatory military decisions. The operational commander must make decisions in a time-space window that is much different than that of the tactical commander. The fundamental decisions the operational commander makes in the preparation of his campaign plan sets the conditions for battle.

The effective campaign plan strikes at the opponent's source of power while preserving one's own. That power source may be political, economic, military, psychological, and/or geographical. The information requirement of the tactical commander concerns only the military situation on the battlefield. The operational commander may orchestrate the battles against the military source, but he requires information concerning all sources of power. This information will focus his efforts against the target most likely to achieve the strategic aim and produce the desired political end state. This information requirement is fundamentally different than the requirements of the tactical commander.

In the assessment of military power it is as important to know the personality and tendencies of the opposing commander as to know all the capabilities of the force. Military operations have been conducted when the assessment made prior to battle indicated that the opposing force was not capable of conducting such an operation. Because of the will of the opposing

commander, the operations were conducted. An example of this was Slim's assessment that the Japanese could not cross the mountain range in sufficient strength to threaten Imphal from the Northeast. This proved to be incorrect. In fact, the feat was accomplished in enough strength to cut off Imphal from Kohima and threaten the retention of the British base at Imphal. Another example of the need to know the opposing commander occurred during the Japanese defense conducted between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers. There had been a change in the command of the Japanese forces and the new commander, Kimura, had positioned his forces to defend on the far bank of the Irrawaddy River. Slim's initial operation had to be altered at the last minute because of this error in assessment.

When assessing the geography the operational commander is concerned primarily with the question of time and space upon which the operations are to be conducted. Certainly the commander is concerned with whether the geography does or does not favor the defense or the offense. More importantly, however, he wants to know whether the geography can support his forces in the selected operational plan. In Grant's campaign against Lee, Grant was concerned that the ruggedness of the wilderness would constrain his ability move his forces through it and mass them before they were attacked. Additionally, the terrain restricted Grant's ability to maneuver allowing Lee to stay between Grant and Richmond. Slim's concern with geography addressed the amount of forces he could sustain on the battlefield because of the maneuver space, the length of his supply lines, and the lack of roads. As stated previously, the operational commander is interested in ascertaining what form of military operation the geography favors; however, he primarily needs information concerning

the amount of friendly and enemy forces that can be positioned, maneuvered, and sustained by the geography.

The operational commander also assesses the economic power base of his opponent. The economic power base can be in the form of one commodity. It may be the industrial capability of a country to sustain an armed force in battle. The commander's concern is how the economic power base affects military operations. The object of a campaign may be the destruction or threaten destruction of this power base if it is determined that the economy is the center of gravity. The important concept here is that the commander needs to recognize the economic power base so he can design his campaign plan to strike at the source of power instead of an ancillary object that does not cause the opposition undue concern.

" It is one thing for nations to 'have' power. But how is that power used and for what purposes? These issues must be decided by the political system."²⁰ The concern of the operational commander is the assessment of how opposing political systems use the various sources of power. It is the decision derived from this assessment that will focus the attention of the commander toward planning his campaign. Grant was aware that the resolve of the Congress to continue the struggle against the South was waning. He knew that a favorable military decision was needed soon to ensure that the war continued toward a favorable conclusion for the North and to enhance President Lincoln's chances of reelection. Conversely, Grant was aware that the political stability of the South hinged on the viability of the Army of Northern Virginia and the success of General Lee. Grant designed his campaign to strike and destabilize the political body governing the South. He

²⁰ Spanier, GAMES NATIONS PLAY, pg. 138

intended to accomplish this by attacking the Army of Northern Virginia while at the same time carrying the war to the depths of the Confederacy.

Grant's decision to bring the consequences of war to the depths of the Confederacy strikes at the final source of power and that is the psychological will of the people. It was Grant's assessment that when the horrors of war were brought to the people of the Confederacy they would compel the Southern leaders to seek an early end to the war. The psychological will of the people of Japan was demonstrated to General Slim and his soldiers by the tenacity with which the Japanese soldier fought. The operational commander's requirement is information concerning the will of the people and how it is most likely manifested on the battlefield. Additionally, the operational commander may elect to design a campaign that strikes at the will of the people of his opponent or to protect his own forces' will if he ascertains that the will is the true source of power. The operational commander may have the ability to strike directly at the will of the people as Grant did or, in Slim's case, strike indirectly at the will of the people by the destroying a portion of the nation's armed forces.

The operational commander requires information concerning the political, economic, military, psychological and geographical nature of his opponent. When this information is obtained the operational commander can design an effective campaign plan against the center of gravity of his opponent and achieve the political end state desired by his political and military superiors. When the operational commander assesses an opponent's sources of power each source has an element that is of greater importance than others. The operational commander should focus the efforts of his campaign on these elements. Without information of this nature the campaign plan will lack focus and will not link to strategic aims.

The organization requires a doctrine and supporting system designed to provide the commander with the necessary information for the planning of campaigns. If this system is not present, the organization must rely solely on the "genius" of the commander. Commanders with the abilities of Grant or Slim are not common. The staff of an operational commander needs to recognize the difference in the nature of the information requirement at the operational level and be able to provide this information to the commander for the formulation of campaign plans.

IMPLICATIONS

Doctrinal manuals concerned with the operational art should recognize the nature of the information required by the operational commander. Additionally, the commander should be provided with a system to provide him the required information. Staff officers must be trained to refocus their attention when conducting an intelligence preparation of the battlefield for operational commanders.

The difference in the nature of the information required by the operational commander is not recognized by current doctrine. The Military Intelligence School is attempting to address this failure. This paper supports this attempt. There is a missing link in the levels of military intelligence. The operations doctrine has exposed this link. Just as there is an Operational level of war, so should there be an Operational level of intelligence.

If a means for producing the required information is not provided by the organization, the organization will have to depend upon the genius of the commander to make the correct assessments. It is not likely that each

organization will have a commander whose abilities are equal to General Slim or General Grant.

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